



HOW TO...

Share your photos online

Robyn Wilder explains how you can let the world view your photographic masterpieces with Flickr

Flickr describes itself as "almost certainly the best" online photo-sharing application, and for once the marketing claims are true. It's a great way to share your pictures with a wider audience over the web, whether they're professional photos, cameraphone images or digital images that are gathering virtual dust on your hard disk.

It's a complex and powerful application and, given its recent acquisition by Yahoo!, its features are likely to grow yet more sophisticated. A basic account is free, so follow our simple steps as we show you how to access Flickr's niftiest bits.

1 Creating a basic account is painless: simply go to www.flickr.com, click the Sign up now button and follow the instructions. You will also be invited to fill in an optional profile; the more information you share about yourself, the more contacts (see Step 3) you are likely to attract.

Upgrading to a 'Pro' account costs around £15 per year and raises the monthly picture upload limit from 20MB to 2GB.

2 Before you upload an image, think about privacy. Do you want the whole world to see your house, your children or your teenage fashion mistakes? Now is the time to ask yourself these questions and specify the default level of privacy in your account settings.

You can upload pictures through the link on the website, by email or by downloading one of Flickr's publishing wizards. These allow you to upload batches of images directly from your PC, and there is also a bookmarklet that you can install on your web browser's toolbar.

Your 'photostream', which is a chronological list of all the photos you've ever uploaded, is updated whenever you upload new images. If you've marked your photos 'public' they will also appear in the 'Everyone's Photos' section, where they may catch the eye of other Flickr users.

3 Other Flickr users may add you as a 'contact' if they like your photos or share your interests. You don't have to add them to your contacts in return, but if you want to add someone, simply click the 'add' link next to their name on their photo page.

Another way to meet people is to join a Flickr group. These are like newsgroups and provide discussion forums. Each group also has its own photo pool to which you can contribute.

4 Once people have started noticing your photos, they may make comments on them. To keep track of the comments you receive, subscribe to your comments' RSS feed and add it to your newsreader.

Tags are another way of cross-referencing photos. You could tag a photo of you on a donkey with the keyword 'Me' or 'Donkey' or both. Then, depending on your privacy settings, other users can search these. Your contacts can even add their own tags to your pictures, and vice versa.

A Notes feature allows you to add comments to specific areas of a photograph. In a family photo, for example, you could add a note for each family member. Notes are superimposed on the photo as transparent squares, and when clicked they reveal their text.

PHOTO SHARING HINTS AND TIPS

■ Add a Creative Commons licence to all your photos to maintain copyright protection. Visit www.creativecommons.org to learn more.

■ Resize your images to a width of 600 pixels or less before uploading them to save on bandwidth and enable you to upload more photos per month.

■ The staff at Flickr maintain a daily weblog of their favourite uploads. You can check it out at <http://blog.flickr.com>.

5 If you have a weblog you can post any publicly listed image to it directly from Flickr. First you need to enter your weblog login details and default layout settings, but once that's done just click the 'Blog this' button above the photo and follow the instructions. You can also add photos to your blog from your cameraphone by sending them to a specific email address.

6 Flickr has hundreds of groups and thousands of photos in daily circulation, so it can feel a little overwhelming. Organizr brings everything together and enables you to exert some control. Here you can sort all the photos you have ever uploaded into albums, or 'sets'.

Once you have given each set a title and a description, it sits alongside your photostream to make browsing a little easier. You can also use Organizr to add your photos to the relevant photo pools of any groups to which you belong.

